

**Claim Amendments**

1 - 15 (Canceled)

16. (Original) The invention as defined in claim 18 wherein the temperature is between about 750°F and 815°F and the workpiece is 304 stainless steel.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Original) A method for producing a nitride or a hard case on an austenitic stainless steel workpiece comprising the steps of:

providing a fused bath of alkali metal cyanate and alkali metal carbonate, wherein said cyanate ion is present in a weight percentage of greater than 45% and less than 55.2%, maintained at a temperature of between 750°F and 850°F, and immersing a workpiece of said austenitic stainless steel in said bath for at least four hours.